



ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT
of CHILD SAFETY

David Lujan, Director
Katie Hobbs, Governor

June 23, 2023

Ms. Lindsey Perry
Auditor General
Arizona Office of the Auditor General
2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, Arizona 85018

RE: Auditor General Report - Arizona Department of Child Safety: Information Provided to Local Foster Care Review Boards and State Ombudsman

Dear Ms. Perry:

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (Department) has reviewed the Arizona Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) findings and recommendations included in the performance audit *Arizona Department of Child Safety—Information Provided to Local Foster Care Review Boards and State Ombudsman* as part of the Department's sunset review.

The Department acknowledges the importance of providing information necessary for Foster Care Review Boards (FCRB) to complete case reviews of children in out-of-home care and the requirement of FCRB attendance. The Department also recognizes the role of the Arizona Ombudsman—Citizens' Aide which is why access to the Department's case management system, Guardian, is critical to their work.

The Department agrees with the findings. The response to each recommendation is enclosed.

The Department appreciates the partnership of the Office of Auditor General throughout this process and looks forward to continued collaboration.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

David Lujan

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David Luján
Director

Enclosure: DCS Recommendation Response

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Finding 1: Department's automated information exchange did not provide some case documents to AOC because of various issues including Department and AOC actions, impacting local boards' ability to review children's cases

Recommendation 1: The Department should ensure it provides court reports, case plans, TDM meeting summaries, and other case documents, as applicable, to AOC on behalf of local boards, consistent with statute.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department acknowledges the importance of providing case documents to AOC for reviews. The Department will continue to take action to ensure court reports, case plans, TDM meeting summaries and other case documents are available and/or provided to local boards. For example, the Department will continue to send email reminders throughout the year to all staff about FCRB Document Disclosures.

Recommendation 2: The Department should ensure Department supervisors hold and document monthly supervision meetings with caseworkers as required by Department policy.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: Monthly clinical supervision discussions are a critical requirement. The Department requires Program Managers to conduct a Gemba Walk (observations) for each directly reporting DCS Program Supervisor of a clinical supervision discussion at least once a month to monitor the quality of supervisory case reviews. These reviews ensure monthly clinical supervision discussions completed by supervisors are held and documented in accordance with policy. Program Administrators and Program Managers will continue to monitor the completion of monthly clinical supervision documentation entered in Guardian through weekly data slide decks and region and section scorecards.

Recommendation 3: The Department should revise and implement policies and procedures to require caseworkers to store court reports in Guardian and supervisors to verify that caseworkers have completed court reports in Guardian, when applicable.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department agrees court reports should be stored in Guardian as part of the case record. The Department has comprehensive step-by-step Guardian guides for creating court reports. The Department will review and update policies, as necessary, to require caseworkers store court reports in Guardian and supervisors verify case documents are stored in Guardian.

Recommendation 4: The Department should develop and implement guidance for what corrective actions supervisors should take in response to caseworkers' noncompliance with Department policies, such as failing to maintain case documents in Guardian as required by Department policy or not complying with the local board case review attendance policy.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department will develop progressive discipline guidance for supervisors when there are staff performance issues. Although the guidance will not be specific for failure to maintain case documents in Guardian or not complying with the local board case review attendance policy, the guidance will be applicable if there are any performance issues.

Recommendation 5: The Department should continue to develop and implement its process to solicit feedback from AOC about automated information exchange issues, including by developing written procedures governing this process.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department agrees feedback from AOC is essential. The Department will continue to develop and implement its process including any written procedures, as necessary.

Recommendation 6: Based on feedback the Department receives from AOC, the Department should take steps to address any continuing or newly identified issues that result in documents not being provided through the automated information exchange, including but not limited to:

- Developing and implementing additional policies and procedures.
- Providing staff training.
- Holding caseworkers accountable for following policy requirements for storing case documents in Guardian.
- Developing processes for communicating to AOC why certain case documents are not provided through the automated information exchange.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department recognizes the importance of identifying and addressing any issues related to the automated information exchange. The Department will take necessary action as required and necessary.

Finding 2: Some caseworkers did not comply with Department's local board case review attendance policy, preventing some local boards from conducting complete case reviews for children in out-of-home care

Recommendation 7: The Department should ensure caseworkers comply with Department policy requirements for local board case review attendance, including by developing and implementing policies and procedures for tracking caseworker attendance at local board case reviews.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and a different method of dealing with the finding will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department acknowledges the importance of caseworker attendance at local board case reviews. The local boards track and communicate attendance with the Department which informs supervisors of attendance. Therefore, the Department will not develop a separate attendance tracking system. This information will continue to be provided to regional Program Administrators to monitor attendance and address, as necessary. The current policies and procedures will be reviewed and revised, accordingly.

Recommendation 8: The Department should revise and implement its policy to require Department staff to provide case updates when they or their supervisor are unable to attend a case review, including time frames for doing so.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department acknowledges the importance providing case updates when the caseworker or their supervisor are unable to attend a case review. The Department will review and revise policies and procedures, as applicable.

Recommendation 9: The Department should work with AOC to determine the information that should be included in updates caseworkers provide to AOC when caseworkers cannot attend case reviews and develop and implement written guidance for caseworkers to prepare these case updates.

Department response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department acknowledges the importance of providing critical information to local boards when caseworkers are unable to attend. The Department will work with AOC to determine what information is necessary for the updates. Policies and procedures will be revised, as applicable.